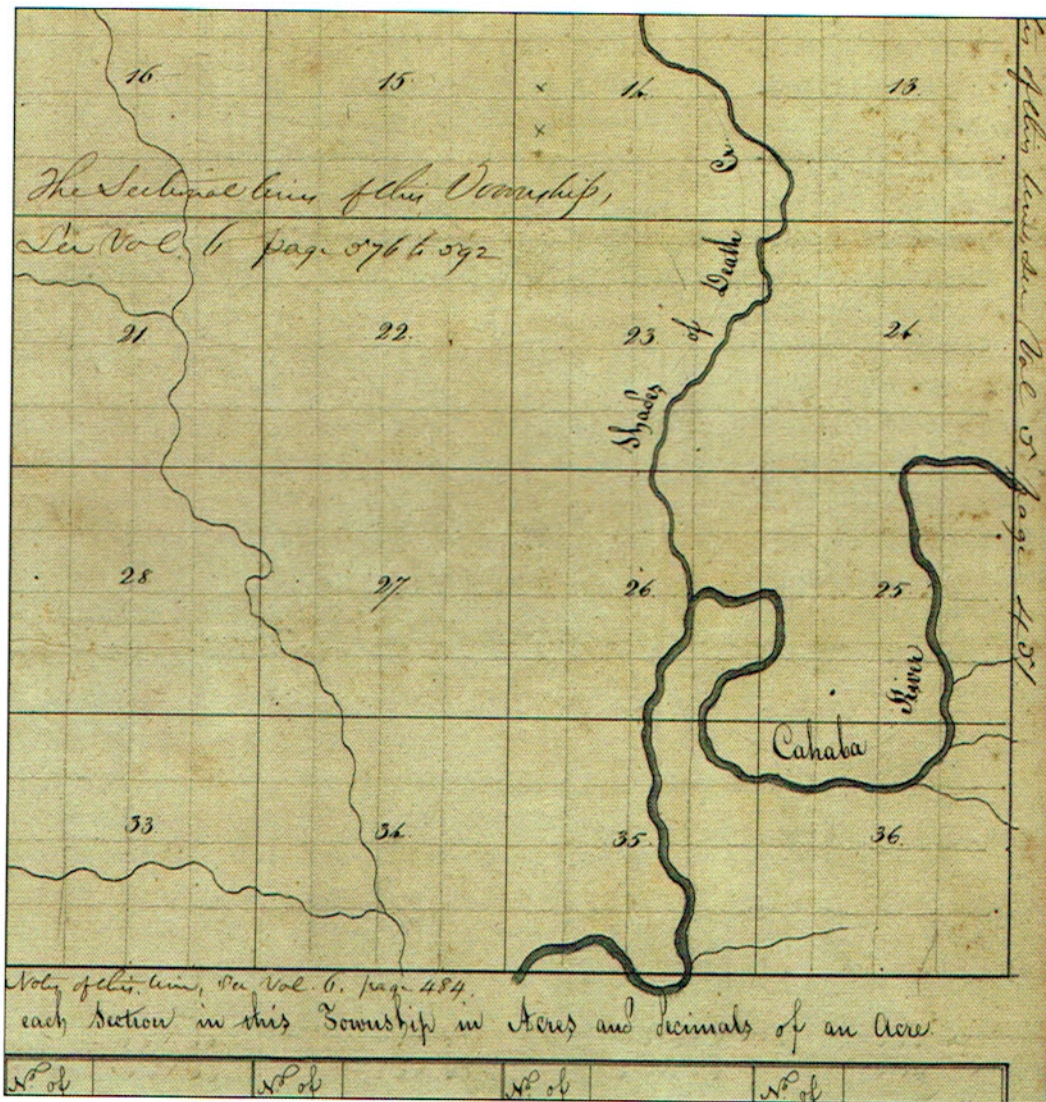


## Settlement to Industrial Success

Following the United States military victory over the Creek Indians in 1814, the lands that became the state of Alabama were surveyed and sold to settlers coming to this area principally from Georgia, Virginia, and the Carolinas. John Coffee became the primary surveyor of public lands in Alabama that officially went on sale in 1819, the year Jefferson County was created. Settlers had begun arriving to squat on lands here following the Treaty of

Fort Jackson in August 1814 when the Creek Nation ceded the lands to the United States. However, county lands were remote from easy transportation, and the rivers that ran nearby were navigable only in certain seasons. There were no railroads. The lands along Shades Creek were even more remote and were reported to be “dangerous” to travelers.



**Coffee's Survey**, showing Shades of Death Creek, 1820. Bibb County Plat Map T21S, R5W from the Coffee Survey of lands in Northern Alabama, 1820. University of Alabama Cartographic Research Library, Historical Map Archive. COURTESY ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY, DISCOVERED BY GLENN LITTLETON.

Today, the Cahaba Environmental Center and nature preserve at the Living River retreat and conference center is located within the bend of the Cahaba River, section 36 on this plat map.

The 1,527-acre Cahaba River Park opened in 2018 by Shelby County and Forever Wild is located along both Shades Creek and the Cahaba River in Sections 25, 26, and 36, shown on the plat map left, along both Shades Creek and the Cahaba River.

### Traveler's Advisory Issued for Shades Creek

Coffee's plat map of 1820 is the first known map that records today's Shades Creek. This map shows the confluence of the “Shades of Death Cr.” with the Cahaba River. The creek was navigable only a few miles up stream from the junction pictured. Its forested slopes teemed with bears and wolves. Early 19th-century traders with the Indians called both the creek and the valley through which it flows “Shades of Death.” At this time, stories abounded of travelers getting lost in the dense foliage and succumbing to wild animals there.

In her “Sketches of Alabama” (*The Weekly Iron Age*, 1886), the writer Mary Gordon Duffey recounts a story told by Duncan McLaughlin of a hunting trip he took over on Shades Mountain where a pack of wolves attacked his dog. He said he took his knife and killed four or five of them. Never having seen such “varmints” before, McLaughlin thought they were panthers, of whose depredations he had heard so many horrible accounts from his neighbors.